

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 6551

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB GR
SUBJ: MEETING OF EUR LABOR ADVISOR AND MINISTER OF LABOR

REF: A. 76 ATHENS 8390; B. 75 ATHENS A211

1. EUR LABOR ADVISER GOOTT VISITED GREECE LAST MONTH.
AMONG HIS ACTIVITIES GOOTT MET WITH MINISTER OF LABOR
LASKARIS. BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE MEMCON POUCHED TO
THE DEPARTMENT.

2. COMMUNIST THREAT: LASKARIS OUTLINED THE FACTIONALISM
WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, RANGING FROM RIGHTISTS IDENTIFIED
WITH THE JUNTA TO LEFTISTS (ESAK) CONTROLLED BY
THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR(KKE).
HE NOTED THAT THE KKE HAS SO FAR HAD LITTLE SUCCESS IN
GAINING CONTROL OF NATIONAL FEDERATIONS OR LABOR CENTERS.
HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE IF THE
COMMUNISTS ARE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR CURRENT APPARENT
EFFECTIVENESS IN TAKING OVER LOCAL UNIONS. MUCH OF THE
KKE SUCCESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SUPERIOR LEADERSHIP AND
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY.

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3. LASKARIS' COUNTER ATTACK: LASKARIS SAID THAT WITHIN
THE CABINET ONLY HE AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HAVE A
FULL APPRECIATION OF THE DANGER OF THE COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE
TO TAKE OVER THE LABOR MOVEMENT. BUT WITH CARAMANLIS'
FULL SUPPORT, HE HAS IMPLEMENTED A THREE-PHASED PLAN TO
ISOLATE THE COMMUNIST FACTION SO THAT THEY WILL BE IDEN-
TIFIED AS BEING SOVIET-CONTROLLED AND EXPELLED FROM THE

MOVEMENT. THE FIRST PHASE BEGAN WITH THE ELECTIONS OF NEW LABOR LEADERS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO REPLACE THOSE WHO HAD BEEN PLACED IN POSITION BY THE JUNDA. THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD UNDER A PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM WHICH RESULTS IN EACH FACTION, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS, WINNING SOME POSITIONS. THUS, THE POLITICAL LOYALTIES OF THE COMMUNISTS ARE PUBLICALLY DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE. THE SECOND PHASE, CONTINUED THE MINISTER, BEGAN RECENTLY AND INVOLVED COOPERATION BETWEEN RIGHTIST AND CENTRIST FACTION TO ISOLATE THE COMMUNISTS. THE FINAL PHSE, LASKARIS PREDICTED, WILL BE TO SPLIT THE MOVEMENT OPENLY BETWEEN COMMUNISTS AND ANTI-COMMUNISTS, ISOLATING THE COMMUNISTS SO THEY CAN BE OPENLY IDENTIFIED BY ALL FOR WHAT THEY ARE.

4. ASSISTANCE FROM THE WEST: AS TO THE ROLE WESTERN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS MIGHT PLAY TO ASSIST IN DEVELOPING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS WITHIN THE GREEK LABOR MOVEMENT, LASKARIS EXPRESSED PESSIMISM ABOUT THE ICFTU, BUT SAID THAT SOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIATS, PARTICULARLY THE INTERNATIONAL METAL WORKERS FEDERATION AND SOME WEST GERMAN UNIONS ARE PROVIDING HELP. HE STATED HE WOULD WELCOME -- AND EVEN ENCOURAGE -- ASSISTANCE FROM THE AFL-CIO. HE THOUGHT AFL-CIO ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE DIRECT RATHER THAN CHanneled THROUGH INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANS, EVEN THOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED SUCH DIRECT AFL-CI

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ASSISTANCE WOULD STIMULATE ADVERSE REACTIONS FROM THE COMMUNIST FACTIONS. HE SAID THAT IF PLANS FOR AFL-CIO ASSISTANCE ARE WELL CONCEIVED AND WELL TIMED, THE PLANS CAN BE EXECUTED SUCCESSFULLY. MINISTER LASKARIS EMPHASIZED HE IS PREPARED TO CONFRONT WHATEVER COMMUNIST OPPOSITION MIGHT MATERIALIZE.

5. COMMENT: LASKARIS' ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES WITH THE LABOR MOVEMENT IS NOT TOO FAR FROM THE MARK. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH ESAK HAS WON CONTROL OF ONLY ONE NATIONAL FEDERATION, THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, IT HOLDS POSITIONS IN THE HIERARCHIES OF MOST OTHER FEDERATIONS AND SIX OF THIRTY-FIVE SEATS ON THE GSEE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD. COMMUNIST LABOR LEADERS ARE CONDUCTING A VIGOROUS, AND APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL, ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL WHICH COULD EVENTUALLY GIVE THEM THE VOTES TO TAKE OVER A MAJOR, PERHAPS CONTROLLING, SHARE OF POWER AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. THEIR CURRENT PUBLIC POSTURE IS ONE OF STRICT LEGALITY AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. THEY ARE WELL FINANCED, WELL ORGANIZED AND MORE IMPORTANTLY -- VERY ABLE LABOR LEADERS. APPARENTLY, THEY ARE SATISFIED, AT THIS TIME, WITH THE DIRECTION AND

PACE OF FACTIONAL COMPETITION WITHIN THE GSEE.

6. INCREASED CONTACTS BETWEEN THE AFL-CIO AND GSEE HAS BEEN AN EMBASSY OBJECTIVE FOR SOME YEARS. IT WAS AN IMPORTANT OUTCOME OF IVP GRANTEES GSEE PRESIDENT PAPAGEORGIOU AND GENERAL SECRETARY KARAKITSOS' TRIP TO THE STATES LAST YEAR. WHILE WEST EUROPEAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN ASSISTING THE GSEE, ESPEICALLY WITH A ROLE ON A STRICTLY UNION-TO-UNION BASIS IN HELPING THE GSEE OVERCOME ITS CURRENT SHORTAGE OF EXPERIENCED LEADERS FAMILIAR WITH MODER LABOR MOVEMENT PHILOSOPHY AND ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNIQUES. KUBISCH

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